

3 Geography

3.1 Geographic Features and Boundaries Available in the 2009 TIGER/Line Shapefiles

The 2009 TIGER/Line Shapefiles contain the geographic extent and boundaries of both *legal* and *statistical* entities. A legal entity is a geographic entity whose boundaries, name, origin, and area description result from charters, laws, treaties, or other administrative or governmental action. A statistical entity is any geographic entity or combination of entities identified and defined solely for the tabulation and presentation of data. Statistical entity boundaries are not legally defined and the entities have no governmental standing.

The legal entities included in the files are:

- Alaska Native Regional Corporations
- American Indian off-reservation trust lands
- American Indian reservations (both federally and state-recognized)
- American Indian tribal subdivisions (within legal American Indian areas)
- Congressional districts
- Consolidated cities
- Counties and equivalent entities (except census areas in Alaska)
- Hawaiian home lands
- Incorporated places
- Minor civil divisions (MCDs, legal county subdivisions)
- Oregon urban growth areas
- School districts
- State legislative districts (upper and lower chambers)
- States and equivalent entities
- Subbarrios (Puerto Rico only)
- Voting districts

The statistical entities included in the files are:

- American Indian/Alaska Native statistical areas
 - Alaska Native village statistical areas
 - Tribal designated statistical areas
 - Oklahoma tribal statistical areas
 - State designated tribal statistical areas
- American Indian Tribal Subdivisions (within Oklahoma tribal statistical areas)
- Census areas (statistical county equivalents in Alaska)
- Census blocks
- Census block groups
- Census county divisions, census subareas, and unorganized territories (statistical county subdivisions)
- Census designated places (statistical place equivalents)
- Census tracts
- Commercial regions
- Core based statistical areas (CBSAs) and related statistical areas
 - Metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas
 - Metropolitan divisions
 - Combined statistical areas
 - New England city and town areas
 - New England city and town area divisions
 - Combined New England city and town areas
- Public Use Microdata areas (PUMAs)
- Super public use microdata areas (Super PUMAs)
- Traffic analysis zones (TAZs)
- Urban areas
- ZIP code tabulation areas (ZCTAs)

3.2 Boundary and Area Changes

The boundaries identified as current for some legal areas are updated boundaries collected since Census 2000 as part of the Census Bureau's Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS). The boundaries of all federally recognized American Indian Reservations and off-reservation trust lands, tribal subdivisions, states and equivalent entities, all counties and equivalent entities, all minor civil divisions (MCDs), all consolidated cities, and all incorporated places generally are those that were legally in effect as of January 1, 2009. Current geography for these entities reflects legal changes to boundaries, such as annexations or deannexations of territory. Current boundaries for elementary, secondary, and unified school districts are collected through a survey of state school authorities under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education and are as of the 2007-2008 school year.

For all other legal entities, and nearly all statistical areas, the boundaries shown are those in effect at the time of Census 2000 whether the data are identified as Census 2000 or current. Because unorganized territories and census designated places (CDPs) occupy the same level of geography as legal MCDs and incorporated places, updates to the legal boundaries may affect the current boundaries for some of these entities, including the elimination of some of the statistical entities and, less commonly, additions to the inventory and changes to boundaries based on local requests. Current geography may differ from Census 2000 geography due to feature updates that cause boundary shifts. For example, if a street feature that acts as a census tract boundary is moved, then the census tract boundary will move as well.

Since the release of the Census 2000 versions of the TIGER/Line files, the Census Bureau has shifted and reshaped most linear features, including those that form legal or statistical area boundaries. The shape and area of the Census 2000 geographic entities portrayed in the 2009 TIGER/Line Shapefiles may differ from their portrayal in the Census 2000 versions of the TIGER/Line files, but the inventory of Census 2000 tabulation entities remains the same.

3.3 Codes for Entities

The Census Bureau is currently transitioning from the Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) codes issued by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to codes issued by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The NIST publications that define FIPS codes for entities for which census data are presented have been withdrawn. Many of the former FIPS codes are being reissued, virtually unchanged, by the American National Standards Institute.

The Census Bureau, citing thirty years of common use, will continue to refer to many of the codes it publishes as FIPS codes with FIPS referring to Federal Information Processing Series. These codes appear in the TIGER/Line Shapefiles in fields such as "STATEFP", where "FP" indicates that the field contains a FIPS code. Federal Information Processing Series codes will continue to serve as the key matching and joining codes for Census Bureau products.

The United States Geological Survey's Geographic Names Information System (GNIS) feature identifier has also been issued as a code standard by the American National Standards Institute. This is a permanent numeric identifier of up to eight digits. The TIGER/Line Shapefiles refers to these eight-character numeric codes as National Standard ANSI codes, and they appear in the files in fields such as "STATENS", where "NS" (for National Standard) indicates that the field contains this type of code. The TIGER/Line documentation also refers to these codes as the ANSI code. The Census Bureau stores the ANSI code as a fixed-width string; the official code is a numeric value without leading zeroes. The ANSI code is only available for current vintage entities.

For more information about the FIPS to ANSI transition, please see <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ansi/ansi.html>.

For more about the GNIS feature IDs please see <http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html>.